

Progress Report: United States Mission to the United Nations
A New Era of Engagement:
Advancing America's Interests in the World

“In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America.”

—President Barack H. Obama, Feb. 24, 2009

Overview

The United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN), led by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, is at the forefront of advancing the Obama Administration's “new era of engagement” and securing America's interests at the United Nations. In an era of transnational security threats, the United Nations is an essential forum for addressing global challenges that undermine U.S. national security and that no nation can solve alone.

On this important stage, USUN is demonstrating to the world every day the changes that have come to U.S. foreign policy under President Obama. In word and deed, in substance and in tone, we are helping to show a different face to the world, and America has already won tangible results.

The Role of the UN in the 21st Century

The threats of the 21st century—terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change, genocide, communicable diseases and desperate poverty among the world's most vulnerable people—are shared challenges that pay no heed to national borders. Modern air travel enables diseases to spread quickly and widely, giving all of us a stake in the public health systems of even the poorest countries. Fragile states struggling to maintain the rule of law or provide basic services for their populations can be breeding grounds for corruption; they can be magnets for crime; they can be hubs for trafficking in people, drugs, and weapons; and they can export violence far beyond their borders.

No nation, even the strongest, can combat the threats or seize the opportunities of the 21st century in isolation. Many of the challenges we face require cooperative action based on shared interest and common purpose. The United States will not always agree with other nations; indeed, our interests may often diverge. But in the Obama Administration, we will confront differences with clarity about America's interests, respect for the legitimate interests of others, and the resolve to find solutions. President Obama's “new era of engagement” means a renewal of American

leadership, a revitalization of our alliances, and a reinvigoration of international cooperation that is essential to promoting our interests and values in the 21st century.

An effective UN remains in America's interests, as great American leaders such as President Truman understood more than 60 years ago, when he saw the newly founded UN as an institution that would enhance America's influence in the world. The United Nations is a unique forum—the only institution where 192 countries can come together to resolve conflicts and address almost every type of global issue.

The United Nations has helped broker and keep peace in countries from Nepal to Haiti, as well as throughout Africa and in the Middle East. The UN is playing a valuable role in two countries that are particularly vital strategic priorities for the United States: Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, the UN is helping to ease sectarian tensions, resolve disputes over internal borders, provide aid to innocents displaced by years of war, and hold free and fair elections. In Afghanistan, the UN is helping to improve economic security, promote political development, coordinate the civilian presence working with the Government of Afghanistan, and build the capacities of the Afghan state—buttressing essential elements of President Obama's new strategy for Afghanistan.

Moreover, UN peace operations are a crucial tool for managing international crises in which the only alternatives might otherwise be doing nothing at all or direct U.S. military intervention. The UN's peacekeeping budget of over \$7 billion represents less than one percent of global military spending but funds 16 peacekeeping operations that help shield millions from the ravages of war across the world, including Darfur/Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Liberia and Haiti. The UN's work to support emerging democracies with legal, technical, and financial assistance has also helped 43 states, from Iraq to Liberia, hold elections and move toward democracy.

The UN is often the first responder when natural disasters strike in impoverished countries. It helps governments build their capacities for effective law enforcement and counterterrorism. The World Food Program feeds 86 million hungry people in more than 80 countries who otherwise would face starvation. The UN has virtually wiped out smallpox and polio and cut global deaths from measles by 74 percent over the past seven years through UNICEF and the World Health Organization. The UN played a central role in the establishment of the universal standards that underpin cell phone calls, e-mails, and TV shows. The UN even helps us get the mail by setting standards for international mail delivery.

Delivering for America

The Obama Administration views diplomacy not as a reward but as an important tool to advance U.S. interests. As the President has stated, "We cannot shun the negotiating table, nor ignore the foes or forces that could do us harm."

The Obama Administration is setting a new tone, renewing America's leadership throughout the world, and this change is on display every day in our diplomacy at the United Nations, where we are bringing to bear the full weight of our influence, voice,

resources and values. Ambassador Rice has met nearly all of the 191 delegations to the United Nations. She has met with dozens of Ambassadors and senior government leaders and established strong working relationships with the UN's top leadership, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his senior advisers. She has communicated America's priorities; she has also sought to listen in order to establish a basis for effective cooperation on critical issues. The United States' message has been clear and consistent: in an age of shared risks and responsibilities, America will do its part, and other nations must too.

This work is already making a difference. The Administration has already helped forge a new climate of unity, resolve, and cooperation in an often divided UN Security Council. USUN achieved a consensus in the Security Council to strengthen sanctions on North Korea in response to its recent missile launch. The U.S. Mission has also worked to promote solutions to the humanitarian crisis and end the genocide in Darfur, as well as to support the faltering peace process in Sudan; address the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka; strengthen essential peacekeeping operations in Africa; buttress the UN presence in Afghanistan; demand a halt to Hamas rocket attacks on Israel, ensure humanitarian relief in Gaza, and reinforce Special Envoy George Mitchell's diplomatic efforts in the Middle East; support Lebanon's sovereignty and independence; increase international efforts to help Iraqis displaced by the war; support a self-governing, independent Kosovo that protects all of its citizens; help young democracies such as Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, and Liberia move successfully from war to peace; fight the scourge of piracy off the Somali coast; and cooperate with Russia to extend the mandate for the UN peacekeeping mission in Georgia.

In the UN General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council, USUN supported a world-wide review of laws that discriminate against women at the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women; worked for measures to reduce deaths in childbirth and support for reproductive health and family planning at this year's meeting of the Commission on Population and Development; and joined the debate on global food security as part of a broader Obama Administration effort to identify more effective ways to help the world's most vulnerable. President Obama also rescinded the "Mexico City policy," that banned U.S. funding to international family planning groups that counsel women about the full range of reproductive-health options and restored funding to the UN Population Fund. The United States also reversed a prior decision and announced its support for a General Assembly declaration condemning human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and supported accreditation to the UN of responsible international non-governmental organizations that advocate for gay rights. USUN has also refocused U.S. leadership on cross-cutting development issues, including by promoting highly qualified candidates for top-level UN jobs in this field.

Key Issues and Events

UN Peacekeeping

Effective UN peacekeeping directly serves U.S. national security interests since UN peace and stability operations help protect civilians, stabilize fragile peace settlements, and prevent regional

conflicts from spinning out of control and producing humanitarian disasters, flow of illicit arms, state failure, and lawless areas that can become safe havens for terrorists and drug traffickers.

UN peacekeeping is also cost-effective for the United States: instead of paying 100 percent of the costs for a unilateral deployment, the United States pays about one-fourth of the costs for UN peacekeeping, with other UN members collectively sharing the burden for the rest. There are now 16 UN peacekeeping operations deployed on four continents, with more than 92,000 troops and police from over 118 countries as of March 2009. USUN will be vigilant in working to make sure that these UN peacekeeping operations are fulfilling their mandates and renewing them based on evidence of continued need and efficacy. Working together with the 14 other Security Council members, the United States supported the renewal of mandates for peacekeeping operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Timor-Leste and Georgia.

In February, Ambassador Rice addressed the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to signal U.S. willingness to join all interested nations and the UN Secretariat in launching a new round of reforms for UN peacekeeping and related field operations. USUN wants to ensure that missions are planned more carefully, deployed faster, led more ably, ended earlier, and avoided altogether when there are more effective and less expensive ways of managing a conflict.

A Fragile State Close to Home: Mission to Haiti

In March, Ambassador Rice participated in a Security Council delegation to Haiti. The Security Council members met with President René Préval, Prime Minister Pierre-Louis, parliamentary leaders, and the UN leadership in Haiti. The delegation conveyed a clear message of international support for Haiti's efforts to rebuild, stabilize, and lay the foundations for long-term recovery and sustainable development.

Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the hemisphere, and it stands at an inflection point between real opportunity and real risk. Since 2004, the United Nations has maintained a peacekeeping force of 9,000 troops and civilian police in Haiti, which has made impressive strides in bringing a measure of stability. But Haiti's progress remains fragile, especially given the ongoing effects of the global financial crisis, the food crisis, hurricanes, and storms that ravaged the country last year.

Shortly after the Security Council visit, the United States played a leading role in an April 14 Donors' Conference on Haiti hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington. The Administration announced an additional \$57 million in assistance to Haiti this year, and Secretary of State Clinton traveled to Haiti to assess the situation there first-hand and convey America's commitment to Haiti's progress.

Intertwined Challenges: Development and Security

Haiti is just one of many examples of the powerful link between security and development, and it underscores the imperative of a comprehensive response to insecurity and underdevelopment. Poverty weakens states' capacity to govern effectively, and a fragile state can become a breeding

ground for transnational threats such as terrorism, international crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking and pandemic disease. Persistent and extreme poverty, disease, and environmental degradation undermine our nation's security and run counter to American values.

Promoting economic development, as well as democracy and responsible governance, is thus an essential pillar of American foreign policy. The Obama Administration is reinvigorating U.S. efforts and investments to promote sustainable economic development. The Obama Administration strongly promoted the UN Millennium Development Goals as the internationally agreed framework for spurring increased global development. USUN is also working with member states and the UN Secretary-General to prepare for a summit in 2010 to review progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to spur innovation in addressing development needs, especially in light of climate change and the global financial crisis.

The US Mission is also identifying the most productive roles for the UN to play in responding to the impact of the global financial crisis on the world's most vulnerable populations. These efforts range from working with UN development agencies on their response to the crisis to helping shape a high-level General Assembly conference in June on setbacks to global development resulting from the financial crisis.

The United States is also intensifying its engagement with the UN's Peacebuilding Commission to ensure that countries such as Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Timor-Leste, and Burundi make the transition from conflict to peace and longer-term recovery.

North Korea's Missile Launch

On April 5, North Korea conducted a launch using ballistic missile technology -- violating prohibitions on developing its ballistic missile program. "Violations must be punished," President Obama said in Prague after the missile test. "Now is the time for a strong international response, and North Korea must know that the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons."

In New York, Ambassador Rice helped forge a strong, united response to North Korea. On April 13, a unanimous Security Council issued a Presidential Statement that unequivocally condemned North Korea's launch, agreed to toughen existing sanctions by extending them to companies and goods linked to North Korea's missile program, and made clear that the Council stood united in opposing any future launches. The statement, Ambassador Rice said, "sends a clear message to North Korea that its violation of international law will not be treated with impunity, and indeed will have consequences."

Working to Save Lives in Sudan

Ambassador Rice has been deeply involved in U.S. efforts to pursue lasting peace in Sudan, end the genocide in Darfur, strengthen UNAMID (the UN-African Union operation in Darfur), support the UN Mission in Sudan, and stave off a growing humanitarian crisis.

In March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for the arrest of President Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity, accusing him of intentionally directing attacks against civilians in Darfur, murdering, raping, torturing, and forcibly transferring large numbers of civilians and pillaging their property—the first arrest warrant the ICC has ever issued for a sitting head of state. “The United States supports the International Criminal Court’s actions to hold accountable those responsible for the heinous crimes in Darfur,” Ambassador Rice announced. She made it clear the United States would not support efforts to defer the ICC arrest warrant and would give up on neither peace nor justice in Sudan.

Shortly after the ICC issued its arrest warrant, the Sudanese government deliberately and recklessly created a humanitarian crisis: it expelled more than a dozen humanitarian aid groups, including Care and Oxfam, and shut down three local relief groups, gravely exacerbating the already dire plight of the civilians of Darfur by denying them lifesaving aid, food, water, and medicine.

“By expelling aid groups, the Sudanese government is denying water, food, health care, and sanitation to people whom it drove out of their homes in the first place,” Ambassador Rice told the Security Council in an emergency session on March 20. “President Bashir and his government are responsible for and must be held accountable for each and every death caused by these callous and calculated actions. The Sudanese government made this decision and owns its consequences, which will not only cost lives but leave the government locked deeper in an isolation of its own making.”

More than a million innocent men, women and children in the camps of Darfur face the growing specter of disease, malnutrition, and starvation. Eight of the 13 expelled NGOs provided between 20 and 100 percent of the water, sanitation, and hygiene needs in 38 locations in Darfur. In one stroke, the expulsions eliminated some 54 percent of USAID’s non-food programs in Darfur; they also eliminated an estimated 40 percent of the delivery capacity of USAID’s main partner in providing food aid in Darfur, the World Food Program.

The United States, led by the President’s Special Envoy, General Scott Gration, continues to work closely with the UN, humanitarian aid groups, and others to try to reduce these gaps and relieve the suffering of the people of Darfur. We have already provided nearly \$4 billion for humanitarian programs in Sudan and eastern Chad since 2004. In 2008 and thus far in 2009, we have provided nearly \$1.25 billion for the people of Sudan. The United States continues to press the Security Council to ensure effective protection for the people of Darfur.

Reform at the Human Rights Council

The United States plays a leading role in standing up for victims of human rights abuses and supporting defenders of human rights and democracy throughout the world. Instead of sitting on the sidelines on these issues at the United Nations, the Obama Administration has announced that the United States will run for a seat on the flawed UN Human Rights Council—with the goal of making it a more effective body to promote and protect human rights.

“Those who suffer from abuse and oppression around the world, as well as those who dedicate their lives to advancing human rights, need the Council to be balanced and credible,” said Ambassador Rice. “The U.S. is seeking election to the Council because we believe that working from within, we can make the Council a more effective forum to promote and protect human rights. We hope to work in partnership with many countries to achieve a more effective Council.”

A Global Effort: Combating Climate Change

Addressing the challenge of climate change is a top priority for the Obama Administration. At the UN as elsewhere, the world has welcomed a new American commitment to fighting global warming. USUN is helping support President Obama’s Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in late April, which seeks to pave the way for success at the UN-sponsored climate change negotiations that will convene this December in Copenhagen. Along with 16 major global economic powers, the UN is a key player in these talks, and in September, the world’s leaders will meet at the UN during the annual General Assembly to continue to work toward a climate change agreement by the end of 2009.

UN Reform

The United Nations must be strengthened to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As the UN’s principal founder, its largest financial contributor, and its host country, the United States—more than any other country—can and must help shape the UN’s actions and lead efforts to fix the institution’s shortcomings. At a time when the UN is being asked to deliver on more fronts than ever, a better-run and cost-effective United Nations is clearly in America’s interest.

The Obama Administration fully recognizes the UN’s limitations, inefficiencies, and weaknesses, and it is working to advance reforms that will strengthen the institution and increase accountability. USUN takes seriously its responsibility to the American taxpayer to ensure that U.S. funds are spent wisely and effectively. The United States is working to ensure that UN management structures operate more efficiently and actively pursues a wide range of management reforms at the UN, including increased financial accountability, transparency, ethics promotion, internal oversight, and whistle-blower protection.

USUN is working to maximize the effectiveness of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, and the Board of Auditors—three key bodies within the UN system responsible for evaluating performance and investigating abuses. Waste, corruption, and fraud are unacceptable anywhere, and USUN helps to hold accountable those who would seek to take advantage of taxpayers in America and around the world.

Yet it is not enough that every dollar be spent cleanly and without corruption; each dollar must be spent wisely so that it serves its intended purpose, whether for humanitarian assistance, development, or peacekeeping. Therefore, USUN actively promotes UN reforms in the areas of human resources, procurement, information technology, and results-based management.

The United States continues to identify and promote high-quality leadership at all levels of the United Nations. We are working energetically to ensure U.S. citizens are appropriately represented within the UN system.

The US Mission is also cooperating with others to improve the performance of newly created institutions such as the Peacebuilding Commission and to revitalize and focus the work of the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council.

The Challenges Ahead

“We have learned that without a doubt there is no quarter of the globe that can wall itself off from the threats of the 21st century. The one way forward—the only way forward—is through a common and persistent effort to combat fear and want wherever they exist. That is the challenge of our time—and we cannot fail to meet it, together.”

—President Barack H. Obama

Beyond peacekeeping, beyond the vital roles the UN is playing in Iraq and Afghanistan, the UN sits at the center of global efforts to tackle climate change, halt the spread of nuclear weapons, stabilize weak and failing states, prevent and resolve conflicts, reduce poverty, combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases, help refugees and the internally displaced, feed the hungry, and confront genocide and crimes against humanity. The United Nations is an essential forum to enhance global peace and security, promote sustainable development, and stand up for human rights, democracy, and human dignity.

We face a world of turbulence and opportunities. The Obama Administration and its team at the United States Mission to the United Nations understand the need to use every arrow in our quiver to advance U.S. interests and promote American security in a changing world of risk and opportunity. On the unique global stage of the UN, we have already manifested and amplified the change that has come to America. In facing the challenges of the 21st century, we are stronger standing together than standing apart.